Family Liaison Office (FLO)

Advocacy, Programs, Services

The Family Liaison Office (FLO) serves U.S. government direct-hire employees, their family members, and Members of Household[1] serving at or returning from our Missions overseas. FLO's mission is to improve their quality of life by providing advocacy, programs, and services online, in Washington, and at over 200 posts worldwide through the Community Liaison Office (CLO) program.

FLO's major program areas are:

- Family Member Employment
- Education and Youth Services
- Crisis Management and Support Services
- Unaccompanied Tours
- Expeditious Naturalization for Foreign-Born Spouses
- The CLO Program

Supporting Diplomatic Families

Community Liaison Office (CLO) Program

For over 30 years the Community Liaison Office (CLO) program has provided support to U.S. government employees and family members who are assigned to American embassies and consulates abroad. FLO extends its services to overseas communities through the management of the Community Liaison Office program at 200 missions worldwide, including several unaccompanied posts such as Baghdad and Kabul. The CLO Coordinator position, also known as CLO, is occupied by a U.S. citizen spouse of a direct-hire employee assigned to post. The CLO holds a sensitive Family Member Appointment (FMA) position and requires a Top Secret security clearance.

The CLO is among the first points of contact for newly assigned or arriving employees and family members, and provides pre-arrival information, orientation, and assistance with settling in at post.

CLOs identify the needs of their community and respond with effective programming, information, resources, and referrals. They serve as advocates for employees and family members, advise post management on quality of life issues, and recommend solutions and family-friendly post policies. Their duties are defined in the following eight areas of responsibility:

- Employment Liaison
- Crisis Management and Support
- Education Liaison
- Information and Resource Management
- Guidance and Referral
- Welcoming and Orientation
- Community Liaison
- Events Planning

[1] Members of Household (MOHs) include individuals not on official travel orders, such as partners, parents, or adult children.

The CLO program is charged with building community spirit and enhancing morale at post. Unlike military installations, CLOs do not have operational funds; many CLOs receive little or no outside funding, and their program relies on self-supporting events or fundraising activities. CLOs rely on the volunteer efforts of employees and family members to share their time and their talents to address community needs.

FLO provides training, resources, guidance, and support to the worldwide CLO program and the CLO Coordinator to support employees and family members overseas.

Family Member Employment

FLO provides advocacy, programs, and services to support family member employment in three major areas: 1) at U.S. overseas missions; 2) outside the mission; and 3) upon return to the U.S.

FLO advocates for the establishment of positions **at overseas missions**, maintains the Family Member Employment Reports (FAMER) from posts around the world, and provides career advising. FLO also collaborates with other Department programs that provide professional employment opportunities to family members, such as the *Professional Associates* and *Expanded Professional Associates* Programs.

To assist family members with their search for employment **outside the mission**, FLO manages the Global Employment Initiative (GEI) Program. As part of GEI, Global Employment Advisors (GEAs) provide career guidance and assistance for local employment at a limited number of posts, and virtual and/or regional support to several others.

For those **returning to Washington**, FLO provides individual and group career advising, and offers *THE NETWORK*, an online bulletin which includes employment resources and job vacancy listings for the Washington area. FLO also refers family members to the Department's *Career Development Resource Center*.

In instances when family members cannot work, or cannot work in their career field, FLO provides other services to enhance professional capability such as the *Professional Development Fellowship* (PDF) Program which provides grants for professional development. Free on-line training is also available through a no-cost agreement with *Manpower Inc.* which makes over 3,500 courses available in 13 languages.

FLO's Employment website, www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c1959.htm, provides detailed information on family member employment and training opportunities.

Expeditious Naturalization Services

FLO assists foreign-born spouses of direct-hire Department of State Foreign Service Officers and Specialists with the expeditious naturalization process*.

FLO provides instructions and source materials to prepare the naturalization packet; acts as a liaison with U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services (USCIS) during the adjudication process; and assists applicants to prepare for the naturalization interview and exams. FLO also provides applicants with information on the regulations that govern expeditious naturalization and informs newly naturalized spouses of the procedures to obtain a diplomatic passport.

*****Expeditious Naturalization is a benefit overseen by the USCIS. The adjudication of applications and receipt of benefits rests solely with the USCIS.

Building Resiliency

Crisis Management and Support

FLO provides confidential assistance in coping with personal and community crises by providing information, support, and advocacy on issues related to:

- Contingency Planning
- Personal and Post Crises
- Eldercare
- Support for foreign-born spouses
- Singles
- Members of Household

During evacuations, FLO is the Department's primary office for providing assistance to all evacuees on allowances, regulations, housing, education, employment, as well as emotional support. As the main point of contact for evacuees, FLO's Crisis and Support staff liaises with post management, regional bureaus, and other offices to support the evacuated community directly, or through FLO's Community Liaison Office (CLO) program.

More information is available on FLO's Crisis Management and Support website, www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c1960.htm.

Unaccompanied Tours (UT)

FLO's Unaccompanied Tours (UT) staff provides confidential outreach, emotional support, and administrative guidance to employees and their family and friends before, during, and after an unaccompanied assignment. Support before the tour includes orientation to manage expectations, identify resources and referral services, and clarify options. During the tour, FLO UT staff facilitates interaction through outreach e-mails, newsletters, book clubs, events, and online community groups and programs. After the tour employees may request children's medals and certificates of recognition.

FLO's UT staff continues to advocate for new policy and improved programs. For additional information, visit FLO's UT website at www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c14521.htm.

Education and Youth

Families who raise children in the Foreign Service lifestyle face unique challenges -- frequent moves, changing cultures, transitions from one school to another and a scarcity of educational facilities and services for special needs children. FLO provides support and resources related to the educational and emotional development of internationally mobile children to enable parents to make educated decisions about their welfare. FLO's Education and Youth staff provide guidance regarding education options at posts overseas, U.S. and international boarding schools, Washington area public and private schools, online education (K - adult), the college admissions process, financial aid, standardized educational testing, children with special educational needs, and summer programs.

FLO collaborates with the Office of Overseas Schools (A/OS), Employee Consultation Service (ECS), and the Foreign Service Youth Foundation (FSYF) to assure that families have the information necessary to make the best choices.

FLO's Education and Youth website, www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c1958.htm, provides detailed information on program allowances, special needs, childcare and more.

Communications and Outreach

Information about FLO advocacy, programs, and services is available online, in FLO newsletters, publications, and through outreach activities. A regular part of FLO's communication and outreach efforts includes gathering data and providing information to keep our communities informed on issues affecting their lives and the options available to them. FLO services can be accessed from anywhere in the world. For more information, contact FLO via:

- The Internet at www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo
- Email to FLO@state.gov
- Telephone at (202) 647-1076 or (800) 440-0397
- The Harry S. Truman Building, Main State, Room 1239
- The Community Liaison Office (CLO) at your overseas post

For specific questions, email a FLO representative at one of the addresses below:

Education and Youth: FLOAskEducation@state.gov
Family Member Employment: FLOAskEmployment@state.gov
Evacuation Support: FLOAskEvacuations@state.gov
Unaccompanied Tours: FLOAskUT@state.gov
Expeditious Naturalization: FLOAskNaturalization@state.gov
Family Member Training: FLOAskTraining@state.gov

FLO: Building Resiliency and Supporting Diplomatic Families through Advocacy, Programs, and Services